



NEWS RELEASE

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Release Date: IMMEDIATE

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Hearing Set for Small Business Owners to Comment About Excessive Federal Regulatory Enforcement

Iowa ICN Locations Allow for Maximum Small Business Participation

DES MOINES, Iowa – Small business owners in Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska with concerns about excessive enforcement of federal rules will have a chance to voice their complaints at a U.S. Small Business Administration Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Hearing on Thursday, June 24th. The hearing will be conducted in Des Moines from 8:30 a.m. – 12 Noon by SBA National Ombudsman Michael Barrera who will be connected to five other cities via the Iowa Communications Network.

Barrera conducts regional hearings and meetings around the country for business owners to discuss openly, without fear of retaliation, their concerns about federal regulatory compliance practices. The hearing in SBA's Region VII has the capacity of being one of the largest held in the country with the help of Iowa's interactive fiber-optic network system. This is the second such hearing conducted via the ICN, with over 30 participants from across the state having been involved in the 2003 Iowa Regulatory Fairness Hearing.

"The availability of the ICN provides our office, and the small business owners throughout Iowa and neighboring states, a remarkable opportunity to address the problems of excessive or unfair enforcement of federal regulations," Barrera said. "Small business owners want to play by the rules and comply with federal regulations," he said, "and we want to encourage federal regulators to assist business owners with compliance rather than go straight to the penalty stage."

Ombudsman Barrera's office works closely with more than 35 federal regulatory agencies to resolve complaints about excessive enforcement of federal regulations. "We take the information from these hearings back to Washington D.C. and work directly federal agencies to encourage a less punitive and more small-business friendly regulatory environment," Barrera said.

Congress created the Office of the National Ombudsman through the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996. The act also established 10 regional fairness boards, served by 50 small business owners from across the country. Paul Kinyon, president of Realty Advisors from Cedar Rapids, Iowa is chairman of the board in Region VII.

Barrera will conduct the hearing from Des Moines at the State Library, Ola Babcock Miller Building, East 12th and Grand Ave., 3rd Floor ICN Classroom. He will be joined there by Kinyon and Des Moines SBA District Director Joe Folsom.

(MORE)

Representatives from the Iowa Small Business Development Center, SBA's counseling and training partner in Iowa, will host hearing participants at these ICN sites:

- **Cedar Rapids** – Kirkwood Community College, 6301 Kirkwood Blvd., Linn Hall, Room 203 B, Cedar Rapids.
- **Council Bluffs** – Iowa Western Community College, 2700 College Road, Continuing Education Building, Room 3, Council Bluffs.
- **Davenport Area** (Bettendorf) – Scott Community College, 500 Belmont Road, Room 210, Bettendorf.
- **Fort Dodge** – Fort Dodge National Guard Armory, 1659 Nelson Ave., Fort Dodge.
- **Sioux City** – Central Campus and Individual Learning Center, 1121 Jackson St., Sioux City

Information gathered from the hearing will be included in the ombudsman's annual report to Congress. The report includes findings and recommendations about the regulatory enforcement environment and its effect on small business. Each federal regulatory agency is also rated in the report based upon their responsiveness to small business comments.

The national ombudsman's authority to respond to comments on compliance issues is limited to federal regulatory enforcement matters and does not include concerns about obtaining federal contracts, regulations in general, or securing guaranteed loans. Unfair compliance practices, excessive fines and audits, or burdensome enforcement of federal regulations have been discussed at previous hearings.

The hearing is open to the public; however those wishing to participate must contact the SBA in Des Moines at (515) 284-4522 prior to the hearing. Should a small business owner or representative be unable to attend, written testimony may be sent in advance of the hearing to be included in the public record.

For additional information about the national ombudsman and this hearing, visit the National Ombudsman's Web site at www.sba.gov/ombudsman.